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New Turkey's new diasporic constellations: The Gezi generation and beyond

TURKEY PROGRAMME

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Summary

- Turkey, like other countries from both East and West, is gradually withdrawing from international cooperation and seeking recourse to a new distinction between civilizations based on a synthesis of nationalism and nostalgic visions of history, memory, and religion. This transformation has been taking place under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and his unofficial Islamist and nationalist coalition partners.
- The latest outflow constitutes a significant wave of migration from Turkey, the largest since the 1990s when displaced, politically-active Kurds left the country in record numbers due to human rights violations and criminalization. Furthermore, one can easily argue that Turkey is also losing some of its brightest people due to the socio-political pressure and shrinking economy.
- This new wave of migration is changing the profile of the Turkish diaspora in European countries. Recent migrants are not necessarily in solidarity with one another and may have competing interests. These dynamics are transferred to destination, where the interaction between the newcomers and the older diasporas cause new tensions. Moreover, some elements of the diaspora are supportive of the authoritarian measures, and there are widening trust issues among diaspora groups from different backgrounds. These new developments have turned the diasporic landscape into a highly contested space and a playing field for the transnationalization of Turkey's domestic disputes.
- Overall, an analysis of the interviews shows that leavers who had to make an involuntary migration decision did so quickly, without a chance to evaluate consequences, best routes or alternatives. Others who left voluntarily had been considering the decision for a long time, and had made enquiries about which country or sector would be the most beneficial for them. Interviews with individuals who did not need to escape immediately left us with the impression that there is a larger community in Turkey today who may be planning to leave at the first opportunity; the lifestyle migration trends we are observing today could, in the long run, prove to be the tip of the iceberg.
- It is too early to comment on how the contemporary waves of migration out of Turkey will shape the exporting of Turkey's domestic conflicts to its diaspora. However, the current situation can give us insights into the direction inter- and intra-group interactions will take in the near future.

Introduction

Turkey, like other countries from both East and West, is gradually withdrawing from international cooperation and seeking recourse to a new distinction between civilizations based on a synthesis of nationalism and nostalgic visions of history, memory, and religion. This transformation has been taking place under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP) and his unofficial Islamist and nationalist coalition partners (Öztürk 2021). Although the party came to power with a promising agenda of reform and democratization, events have slowly but surely moved in another direction as the ruling party has gained more and more power (Caliskan, 2017; Taş, 2018a; Kaygusuz, 2018; Christofis et al., 2019). Today's Turkey has a new regime (Yavuz and Öztürk, 2019) which is distancing itself on a daily basis from the main pillars of democracy: human rights, the Rule of Law, fair elections, and freedom of speech (Topak 2017; Baser and Öztürk, 2017). Especially after the abortive coup in 2016, there has been a massive crackdown on opposition groups both at home and abroad (Milan, 2016). [More than 150,000 people were suspended and some 50,000 were jailed](#). Some called this process a "purge", in which thousands of people who sympathized with the controversial and multi-dimensional Gülen Movement (GM), but others, too, from various walks of life who resisted AKP rule in Turkey, were sacked from their posts by emergency decrees, arrested or destined for a civil death situation. The political environment has become severely unstable and insecure for those who are not loyal to the AKP and President Erdogan.¹

"The coup attempt can be seen as a milestone for the acceleration of Turkey-originated migration to Europe. However, it can be argued that the recent wave had already begun after the Gezi protests in 2013, when many people in Turkey lost hope for further reforms and democratization in the country."

The coup attempt can be seen as a milestone for the acceleration of Turkey-originated migration to Europe. However, it can be argued that the recent wave had already begun after the Gezi protests in 2013, when many people in Turkey lost hope for further reforms and democratization in the country (Goksel and Tekdemir, 2018; Tziarras, 2018). Many white-collar employees, students and activists began leaving Turkey (or started to consider leaving) to start a life abroad in the global North and South, in the light of their life-style choices, concerns for the future, and perceived lack of human rights in Turkey. After the coup attempt, however, most migration decisions were involuntary, made out of fear of persecution, arrest and torture. The approval rates for asylum applications are an indicator that the countries of Europe acknowledge the factual basis of these fears.

Current statistics show that given this gloomy political atmosphere in Turkey, many Turkish citizens, primarily members of the GM plus secular Turks, Kurds and Alevis, are fleeing or migrating to Greece—mostly as a transit destination—and to other European countries. Some are applying for asylum, while others are buying property to obtain residence permits via the golden visa systems available in several European countries. Recent data shows that thousands of Turkish citizens have applied for asylum in Greece, Germany and Sweden. [Authorities underline that until 2015, the applicants were mostly of Kurdish origin, while the profile of applicants after 2015 is usually non-Kurdish](#). The number of Turkish citizens granted protection status in European Union member countries [rose by 300% between 2016 and 2017 alone](#). About one third of these applications were ultimately successful. As Lampas (2018: p.2) argues, "recognition rates vary significantly among European countries. Norway holds the highest rate of recognition with 89.7%. By contrast, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria have yet to reach a positive decision. Greece has a rate of recognition of 54.5%".

[According to some controversial pro-Gülenist sources](#), asylum applications made by

¹ For more information on the human rights situation in Turkey, see the recent report from Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/turkey>.

Turkish citizens rose 9% in 2019, with Turks becoming the sixth largest group seeking asylum in Europe. [Likewise, various trustworthy channels have noted that the trend continued in 2020, when Turkey was ranked fifth in the list of countries with the highest number of asylum applications filed in Europe.](#) The Infomigrants website reports that more than 50% of those who flee Turkey choose Germany as their ultimate destination, and asylum applications by Turkish citizens have multiplied in recent years. In 2018 alone, there were over 10,000 applications to Germany (the trend continued in 2019 and 2020, too). Considering that only around 1800 applications were made between the Gezi protests and 2015, this is a remarkable increase. [In 2019, Turkish asylum seekers constituted the third largest group in Germany after Syrians and Iraqis.](#) According to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), only a quarter of the applicants received refugee protection. In the case of Greece, it is reported that since 2018, there has been a 1,300% increase in asylum applications from Turkey (Lampas, 2018: p.1). Greece has been a transit destination, a common route for those who cross the Evros/Meriç river with the help of smugglers and either apply for asylum in Greece or continue onwards towards their main destination, which is usually another European country where they have relatives (Lampas, 2018: p.2; Christofis et al., 2019).

“These numbers clearly indicate that the latest outflow constitutes a significant wave of migration from Turkey, the largest since the 1990s when displaced, politically-active Kurds left the country in record numbers due to human rights violations and criminalization. Furthermore, one can easily argue that Turkey is also losing some of its brightest people due to the socio-political pressure and shrinking economy.”

Apart from asylum applications made to various countries in Europe, the United Kingdom is also a popular destination for Turkish entrepreneurs and white-collar employees. The Ankara Agreement scheme ([the “Turkish Businessperson” visa](#)) has become even more attractive for those who want to start a new life outside Turkey. [In 2018, there was a 6,000% increase in Ankara Agreement applications.](#) Statistics show that [more than 20,000 Turkish entrepreneurs have applied for work visas in the UK.](#) Between Brexit and the expiry of the agreement, [the number of applications tripled.](#) Turkish citizens who want to flee the country for political reasons also use this scheme as a safe route to acquiring residence permits outside Turkey. Countries such as Portugal, Greece and Malta are also primary destinations for wealthy people from Turkey who are willing to invest a certain amount of money and assets in these countries in order to obtain [residence permits and citizenship.](#)

These numbers clearly indicate that the latest outflow constitutes a significant wave of migration from Turkey, the largest since the 1990s when displaced, politically-active Kurds left the country in record numbers due to human rights violations and criminalization. Furthermore, one can easily argue that Turkey is also losing some of its brightest people due to the socio-political pressure and shrinking economy. Turkey's diaspora communities abroad were already ethnically, religiously and ideologically heterogeneous, consisting of Turks, Kurds, Alevis, Leftists and nationalists. This new wave of migration is changing the profile of the Turkish diaspora in European countries. Recent migrants are not necessarily in solidarity with one another and may have competing interests. These dynamics are transferred to destination countries such as Germany, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom, where the interaction between the newcomers and the older diasporas cause new tensions. Moreover, some elements of the diaspora are supportive of the authoritarian measures, and there are widening trust issues among diaspora groups from different backgrounds. These new developments have turned the diasporic landscape into a highly contested space and a playing field for the transnationalization of Turkey's domestic disputes.

Given the above, this study was based on semi-structured interviews in various European countries with participants chosen from different segments of the newly-emerging Turkey-originated diaspora, based on networks the authors' formed during earlier studies of Turkish migration to Europe along with purposive snowball sampling and chain referrals (Penrod et al., 2003). Given the highly sensitive topic, the names of the

interviewees have been anonymized to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. A total of 55 interviews were conducted, 20 between 2017 and 2019 and 35 between 2020 and 2021. Some of these interviews took place via Skype and Zoom, but the majority were face to face.²

Who Is Leaving Turkey?

“Looking at the current situation in Turkey, it is not hard to guess that the push factors are political, sociological and economic.”

Looking at the current situation in Turkey, it is not hard to guess that the push factors are political, sociological and economic. People simply do not feel secure in Turkey if their political views are not in line with the ruling AKP, and particularly with President Erdogan. Social media accounts are monitored, and people are prosecuted for their posts on Twitter and Facebook, either for insulting the president or for terrorist propaganda (Yesil and Sozeri, 2017). There is no room for civil society to grow, and media outlets are heavily controlled by the state (Griffen, 2019). [The economic decline is coupled with corruption allegations against many members of the ruling elite](#). A report by the Turkish Statistical Institute reveals that in 2017, [more than 250,000 Turkish citizens migrated to another country](#). In 2019, [this number increased to 330,289](#). Although the government tends to downplay the brain drain and massive exodus from Turkey, mainstream media outlets have started to highlight the importance of large migration flows towards the global North. For instance, interviews conducted by the investigative journalist Melis Alpan have revealed that people opt to leave due to feelings of insecurity, Turkey's distancing itself from Western standards, and lack of freedom of speech. [Corruption and the societal transformation of the last decade are also compelling many to leave](#). Our fieldwork observations and interviews revealed similar motivations: a combination of these factors make people migrate voluntarily or involuntarily by legal or illegal means, often through ethnic/religious/ideological networks.

Most of the asylum seekers are either GM sympathizers or have been accused of being active members of the movement, whose membership ranges from teachers to diplomats, businessman to academics, [constituting a heterogenous community](#). As Taş (2019) states: “Although the GM has heavily invested in the global South, the global reach of the crackdown impelled the movement to head towards Western democratic countries, where the Rule of Law may still provide a shield against the intimidation of the Turkish government”. The movement's elites had already started migrating outside Turkey before the coup attempt, due to clashes with the AKP (Taş, 2018b; Watmough and Öztürk, 2018). However, other members who have sought to leave since the coup have not had an easy time of it. Their perilous journeys across the Aegean or the Evros/Meriç river—either on their own or with the help of smugglers—make media headlines almost every month. In 2018, the number of illegal crossings of the [Greek-Turkish river border doubled](#), and they continue to cost human lives today.

When it comes to recent Kurdish migration, it can be said that the collapse of the peace process and the relapse into violence and oppression has brought to an end a period in which it was hoped the conflict might be resolved (Baser and Ozerdem, 2019). With the failure of the process, the Turkish state started clamping down on dissident voices in all sectors including politics, civil society and the media. Kurdish politicians, activists, civil society representatives and lawyers were not spared from the new oppressive turn. Many passports have been confiscated and many people have been arrested on bogus

² The majority of the interviews were conducted by Associate Professor Ahmet Erdi Ozturk. The interviews between 2017 and 2019 were part of a research grant supported by the Swedish Institute. The latter fieldwork has been conducted as part of Dr. Ozturk's Marie Curie Grant which focuses on new migration flows from Turkey to Europe.

charges, with others taken into custody or still awaiting trial. This environment created another wave of Kurdish migration to Europe; however, there are no specific statistics for determining what percentage of the whole these migrants represent. A significant number of academics have also fled Turkey to live in exile. [The Academics for Peace petition](#), which protested spiralling violence against Kurdish populations, was declared a terrorist act by the president, and court cases were initiated against the signatories (Baser et al., 2017; Sertdemir Özdemir, 2019).

[The recent economic crisis in Turkey](#) has also created an incentive to leave for many. Combined with the political turmoil, it has spurred many white-collar employees and students to seek their future elsewhere in what has been termed a Turkish “brain drain”. Journalist Gunes Komurculer addresses this issue: “This trend’s main motto is ‘the sooner the better’. It is not easy to find the exact data on how many professionals or students are leaving Turkey, but a rise in the number of Turks with good educational backgrounds can be seen in a number of foreign databases or understood even during small gatherings among friends, [where] at least one person is making plans to live in a foreign, preferably [Western, country](#).” Most of the people who fit in this category are well-educated and can easily find jobs abroad. As another newspaper report put it, “[they leave because they can](#)”. In addition to these categories, there are students, Leftists, intellectuals, public figures, persecuted politicians, civil society representatives, journalists, movie makers and authors who are populating the new Turkey-originated diasporic landscapes. There is a new diaspora-in-the-making which will, in the long run, change the diaspora profiles by creating new venues for adversaries and solidarities.

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Despite media attention, this topic has yet to be analyzed systematically in academic publications. Only a few articles have dealt with the significance of this phenomenon, which is crying out for systematic and interdisciplinary engagement to assess its short- and long-term impact, not only on the diaspora communities, but also on Turkish and European societies at large. In order to fill in this gap in the literature, we present a snapshot of the current dynamics in this policy scoping paper. During our fieldwork, we intended to capture as many voices as we could in order to gain a comprehensive view of the evolving dynamics. Our sample included participants who fit into all these categories. There were also significant overlaps: many of those who migrated because of their Gülenist connections were also academics and therefore benefited from [Scholars at Risk](#) fellowships. Others had trials pending in Turkey, having been accused of promulgating terrorist propaganda due to their participation in protests related to the Roboski incident and in Kobane demonstrations (Balta, 2015), but travelled to Europe on student visas and overstayed. We will therefore argue that statistics and strict categorizations may hide the real motivations behind migration, and that quantitative data should be matched with qualitative interviews in order to better gauge the intricacies of Turkey-originated migration flows into Europe.

Each participant shared their individual story, which clearly demonstrated that their grievances were diverse and multi-layered. Participants who belonged to the GM revealed that, although the common perception is that many members of the movement take the Evros/Meriç river route to flee Turkey, they had used conventional methods to leave the country. However, this only happened in the early stages of the post-coup-attempt purge, or right before the attempt itself in 2016. The elite members of the movement had valid European or American visas and left by simply purchasing a plane ticket. They took the decision to apply for asylum at a later stage, as the political situation in Turkey continued to deteriorate day by day. Another common strategy was to immediately migrate to one of the Balkan countries where Turkey has visa-free agreements, such as North Macedonia or Albania.

A participant who is currently residing in Germany as an asylum seeker shared his story with us. He left Turkey three days after the coup attempt and moved to North Macedonia. He opened a business there by investing around 1,000 British Pounds, which earned him a residence permit. With this valid residence permit, he lived in North Macedonia for over a year before applying for a tourist visa to Germany. He drove to Germany with his family and applied for asylum there. Another interviewee chose to go to Albania, where he immediately started working for a Gülenist school. Having a work permit in Albania, he applied for a German visa and, like the previous interviewee, applied for asylum as soon as he entered Germany. The narratives of the members of the GM reveal that the Gülenist networks in the destination countries created solidarity support for the newcomers. Simply having job security and getting advice from people who had settled in these countries enabled them to reach Europe by a safe route, avoiding any involvement in the sort of dreadful stories that make the headlines. Other members of the movement used similar routes to reach Asian and African countries with which Turkey has no-visa agreements. Common destinations in this category included South Africa, the Philippines and Pakistan. These countries were also used as a transit to Japan and Australia, where the same tactics were used (employment in a non-visa country, moving to a safer country on a tourist visa and then applying for asylum). The motivation for aiming to reach European and other democratic countries stems from the need to reach safety for themselves and, especially, for their families. Interviewees talked about feeling insecure in the Balkan countries, for instance, where they were within easy reach of the Turkish authorities and where instances of [kidnapping and extradition](#) were known. Gülenist interviewees underlined the fact that they were afraid of [unfair trials in Turkey](#), and European countries seemed to be safer for them. However, Turkey is still pursuing prosecution via international channels, including the use of [Interpol Red Notices](#).

“Gülenist interviewees underlined the fact that they were afraid of unfair trials in Turkey, and European countries seemed to be safer for them. However, Turkey is still pursuing prosecution via international channels, including the use of Interpol Red Notices.”

The motivations of other interviewees also revealed similar reasoning, even if they were less afraid of being tortured and beaten in Turkish prisons. For instance, a signatory of the Academics for Peace petition left Turkey right after the petition was criminalized, due mobbing in her work environment. She applied for a fellowship designed for scholars at risk and found employment at a German university. Her passport was valid at that time, and she imagined her visit would be temporary until the political situation calmed down in Turkey. However, the post-coup environment worsened rapidly and her passport was cancelled by emergency decree. Her primary motivation was to take a break from Turkey's “toxic political environment”, however the unprecedented consequences left her in limbo. Although the legal cases against the signatories were dismissed in September 2019, her passport is still blocked and she cannot travel outside Germany. Other Academics for Peace interviewees recounted similar stories. One of them had a tourist visa for France and applied for asylum there as soon as she arrived. Others still have valid passports and were not ‘blacklisted’ in emergency decree lists, but do not believe they would be safe if they returned to Turkey. Institutions like Scholars at Risk or CARA (the Council for At-Risk Academics) have become a life-line for Turkish academics who are trying to survive in exile.

A Kurdish student who was targeted after the collapse of the peace process also shared his story with us. He was arrested in 2016 for allegedly supporting the PKK and then released pending decision. He had ongoing trials in Turkey³ and it was likely he would face a heavy prison sentence. He decided to flee the country using a fake passport. He entered Europe from Malta and then travelled to his destination country. He applied for

³ The details of the trials were not shared with us.

asylum there and is currently a university student pursuing his dreams abroad. Another Kurdish student who had a pending trial in Turkey travelled to the UK on an exchange programme and then applied under the Ankara Agreement to be able to stay legally in the UK. If such an opportunity had not been available, he confirmed that he would have thought about asylum as the next option, though preferably in a country other than the UK, which is known to have restrictive policies towards asylum seekers from Turkey. Kurdish participants asserted that they usually chose their destination countries on the basis of the presence of relatives and/or friends, as well as of a Kurdish diaspora which could help them resettle.

With regard to voluntary migration, a highly-educated white-collar employee from Turkey decided to leave Turkey, despite enjoying stability in Turkey with no political engagement with dissident groups, for what he defined as “feelings of multi-dimensional insecurity”. He explained his rationale to us:

I felt like my financial savings and intellectual capital have no value in Turkey. I felt I had no security. If I found a job, my workplace could be closed any day. If I put my money in the bank, the state might confiscate it or the bank might go bankrupt. There is no merit-based employment. My educational background [a BA from a prestigious university in Turkey and two MAs from a high-ranking university in the UK and another in Turkey] does not correlate with the cultural codes of the New Turkey. Today I buy something that is worth 10,000 and tomorrow it is worth 50,000.

He stated that his relatively young age and educational background encouraged him to leave. He liquidated his assets and started a BA degree in the Netherlands with a view to beginning a new life. Whereas, for the other interviewees, the primary motivation was human security, for this interviewee it was financial and social security. He was not the only participant who mentioned those worries. Families with young children in particular tended to make such big decisions based on pressing issues relating to education in Turkey. For instance, the dispute over children's compulsory attendance of religious schools in Turkey accelerated the “[exodus](#)” or the “[human capital flight](#)” of [white-collar, secular Turks](#). The brain drain seems to be continuing, damaging vital sectors in Turkey, [including engineering](#). A report prepared by the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) revealed that in 2016 alone, 24,000 engineers left Turkey to work abroad. Some experts and politicians have called this category of leavers the “[Gezi generation](#)”. This is a generation of highly-educated and highly-skilled young people who are convinced that Turkey is not going to give them what they want for a stable life in the foreseeable future.

“Overall, an analysis of the interviews shows that leavers who had to make an involuntary migration decision did so quickly, without a chance to evaluate consequences, best routes or alternatives.”

Overall, an analysis of the interviews shows that leavers who had to make an involuntary migration decision did so quickly, without a chance to evaluate consequences, best routes or alternatives. Others who left voluntarily had been considering the decision for a long time, and had made enquiries about which country or sector would be the most beneficial for them. Interviews with individuals who did not need to escape immediately left us with the impression that there is a larger community in Turkey today who may be planning to leave at the first opportunity; the lifestyle migration trends we are observing today could, in the long run, prove to be the tip of the iceberg.

New Diasporic Constellations

It is too early to comment on how the contemporary waves of migration out of Turkey will shape the exporting of Turkey's domestic conflicts to its diaspora. However, the current situation can give us insights into the direction inter- and intra-group interactions will take in the near future. The participants who belong to the GM stated that they have had no interactions with other diaspora organizations or members since they arrived. No interaction also means no solidarity. According to them, there are two main reasons for this: first, they have trust issues, since they cannot be sure who is serving the Turkish state and who is on their side. They are suspicious about interacting with established diaspora members. They have separated their mosques and social networks from regime loyalists. Secondly, a number also mentioned that being accused of attempting a coup attempt and labelled as terrorists deters other people from engaging with them. Moreover, other opposition groups also hold grudges against them because of their close relationship they maintained until recently with the AKP government.

This same theme resonated in other interviews with academics in exile, as well as with Kurdish activists. For a long time, the GM criminalized the leftist Kurdish nationalist movements, and persecuted them even in Europe. This was especially true when the GM was part of the establishment controlling the police force and judiciary in Turkey, particularly between 2007 and 2013. A Kurdish diaspora member in the UK said: "We want fair trials for everyone, but showing solidarity is something else. They were partners in crime [with the AKP]. The political atmosphere is authoritarian now because of them. Our opinions cannot change overnight just because they portray themselves as somehow victims". Participants who were signatories to the Academics for Peace petition feel that Gülenist academics are abusing the system when they apply for scholarships offered by CARA or Scholars at Risk. A number of them reminded us that when Gülenist academics were in charge at universities before the coup attempt, they were the first to stigmatize the signatories. The post-coup period cannot suddenly erase those political memories. It could be argued that, although the Gülenist and other leftist, Alevite and Kurdish opposition groups are fleeing Turkey in the face of the same political atmosphere, their experiences do not necessarily bring them together. Since the GM had extensive transnational networks even before they went their separate ways with the ruling party (Dreher, 2014), they had many contacts in the host countries' political and social networks. This is a clear advantage for them, which they are making wise use of, with the current anti-Erdogan sentiments in Europe making it easier for them to gain sympathy from non-Turkish actors in Europe (Taş, 2019).

"We observed that white collar employees have a different approach to engaging with other communities from Turkey."

A majority of the Kurdish participants who recently migrated out of Turkey stated that the existence of the Kurdish diaspora in their new cities created a comfort zone for them and made them feel safe. The institutions and members of these established diaspora helped them to settle in, find a home and prepare legal documentation for their asylum applications. They quickly integrated into existing Kurdish diaspora networks, although a few participants were hesitant about doing so. A Kurdish student in Sweden said he needed some time to adapt to his new environment before he could "continue the struggle", and sometimes it is hard to keep a distance. As for the members of the Gülenist diaspora, existing networks became vital for their survival. However, the Kurdish diaspora (newcomers and established diaspora) have more solidarity networks than the Gülenists, who are isolated from other groups from Turkey. A signatory of the Academics for Peace petition confirmed that the existence of Alevite and Kurdish diaspora organizations helped her survive in her new environment. She received help in finding a house to rent and also received pastoral care when she needed it. Navigating a new situation while in exile became bearable thanks to the support she received from

the established Kurdish, Alevi and leftist diaspora organizations.

We observed that white collar employees have a different approach to engaging with other communities from Turkey. For instance, those who migrated under the Ankara Agreement, without necessarily having a political agenda, prefer not to get involved in politics in the transnational space, either. They join existing online networks and organize get-togethers with other Turkey-originated communities, but these meetings are usually about sharing information and legal, social and cultural advice. Some online fora specifically ask that no political posts be shared; polarized issues originating from Turkey are not welcome. A participant mentioned, "If I came here for a new life, I do not want to interact with Turks all the time. I migrated for a reason". For another participant, talking about politics was not an issue, but he claimed that everything is so polarized that people do not trust each other, even within the diaspora. Some interviewees revealed that they conceal information about their previous jobs and affiliations and share information about their past on a "need to know" basis. Given the multiple fragmentations and multifaceted cleavages, Turkey-originated migrants form fragile and hesitant newcomer communities, or amalgamate into previous networks with the utmost care.

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It is also important to mention the potential interactions between the established Turkey-originated diaspora and the newcomers in general. In our research to date, we have observed minor tensions between former activist groups and the newcomers. First of all, depicting the newcomers as "intellectuals in exile" and the established diaspora as "uneducated AKP supporters", and comparing the former unfavourably to the latter has not left the established diaspora well-disposed towards the newcomers. Secondly, although the newcomers have received help and support from the established networks, new diaspora organizations founded by the new members have started to mushroom, especially in Germany. A member of a leftist diaspora organization lamented that these newly-established organizations are undermining years of work put in by the established diaspora networks. We observed that it will take a long time for the boundaries between the different layers of migration to become less visible.

Prospects for Return

Our observations reveal that Turkey's long reach into diaspora spaces can create an atmosphere of insecurity and fear for those who are threatened with prosecution in Turkey. However, the experience of individual communities and even individuals varies depending on a range of factors. Those who belonged to the GM admitted that they still feel insecure, and are aware that it is not only the Turkish prosecutors who are after them, but also Turkey's transnational state apparatuses, which include the embassies, the *Diyanet* (Presidency of Religious Affairs), the Undersecretary responsible for Turks abroad, as well as civil society organizations within the diaspora which have organic ties to the government and the president. Their passports are cancelled, which means they do not interact with the embassies or consulates for bureaucratic matters. They also fear arrest if they enter these Turkish official premises. A majority of them confirmed that, even though there was no pending trial against them when they left, there are now arrest warrants and open cases against them. Because they are also scared of other members of the Turkish community snitching on them, they live an isolated life. Two interviewees said that they do not go to the mosque anymore to avoid interacting with other Turks, and that they gather at each other's houses for prayers. Another member of the GM said that he was not an important figure in the movement, so he is not afraid of being recognized by other Turks; nonetheless, he still avoids common spaces to avoid

conflict and feelings of discomfort. Other interviews also revealed that it is those who left because of activities which clashed with the authorities or the official view presented by the state who feel most under pressure. Those who emigrated voluntarily for primarily economic or social reasons do not necessarily feel at risk of authoritarian measures abroad. Among other interviewees, there were a few who said that it is what happens in Turkey, rather than in diaspora spaces, that made them feel insecure. Only public figures in exile, such as prominent journalists or politicians, feel exposed and targeted. Others, unless they become visible for some reason, can afford to create a safe zone for themselves. According to Kurdish interviewees, the Kurdish diaspora community is immune to living under pressure, and so the recent measures have not generated any extra stress for them. Some also claimed that the Gülenists have become the number one target for the Turkish state, so there are no policies in place which specifically target Kurds, only the ordinary measures that have been in place for decades.

“...this new wave of migrants is here to stay, and its impact on the diasporic landscapes has yet to be revealed.”

How, then, do these current feelings affect the prospects for return? Will the migrants who arrived with the new wave consider returning to Turkey “when the time is right”? We received varying answers to this question. A majority of the interviewees revealed an intention to return, and more than half of them define themselves as being “in exile”. Among the white collar employees and others who left for economic and social reasons, the decision to depart seemed more certain and permanent. Our fieldwork observations showed that those who left immediately due to political persecution feel the need to return, while others who took a long time to decide whether they wanted to migrate or not have taken a more decisive approach to starting a new life. The testimony of a member of the GM reveals the dilemma he faces:

“Turkey is our country and, of course, we want to go back. But we are waiting for the risks to be eliminated [...] I think there are two prerequisites: stability in Turkey and the state admitting that we are not terrorists and not guilty for the coup attempt.”

For white-collar interviewees, Turkey will need a long time to recover economically, socially and politically and they do not want to suffer the consequences of the damage. One interviewee said he might consider returning when he has secured a position in Europe such as citizenship or permanent residency. As he saw it, although the idea of returning and contributing to Turkey's development was intriguing, Turkey is so unstable that one has to minimize the risk. For others, once their children are happy and settled in the host country, there will be no turning back. One interviewee who perceived herself to be in exile said “I want to return, but I feel as though I am becoming more alienated from Turkey every day. How am I going to adapt when I go back? But I cannot stay here, either”. Although feelings of return prevail in the imaginations of the newcomers, most seem unlikely to return in the near future. This confirms our initial argument that this new wave of migrants is here to stay, and its impact on the diasporic landscapes has yet to be revealed.

Conclusion

Even though Turkey has been a sending and receiving state for migrants since the late Ottoman period, the migration of Kurds, Alevis and other opposition groups in the second half of the twentieth century has raised new issues such as the transnationalization of homeland conflicts, the importation of domestic conflicts, and the transfer of clandestine political resistance networks. When the AKP entered government, it sought to transform Turkey's diaspora policy. Despite its relatively positive intentions, the AKP's authoritarian drift has started to impact on most of the

country's structures. Against this backdrop, new migration flows keep leaving Turkey for Germany and other European countries due to Turkey's democratic decline and economic uncertainties. The new migration flows have introduced new dynamics, and it is too early to predict how they will change Turkey's diasporic landscapes in the long term. Recent studies show that "Turkish refugees experience solidarity and sympathy from some people with a Turkey-related migrant background and their organizations, while others are hostile towards them in everyday life" (Roing, 2019). More research is needed if we are to more fully understand the actual impact of the authoritarian turn on the migrants' everyday lives, the relationships between the established diaspora and the newcomers, and the host countries' responses to these drastic changes.

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